

Out of the Deep
by
Paul Mariett
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OUT OF THE DEEP

BY PAUL MARIETT

CERTAINLY it was not a beautiful room — according to modern traditions of simplicity and severity; yet it reflected a personality as simpler rooms might not, for every wall bore a book-case filled with rare editions and costly bindings; and, above these, in riot and incongruity, were tiers upon tiers of pictures, pictures of many times, lands, and schools, yet all — like the books — chosen with unerring taste. For the rest, a very disorderly table, piled perilously with manuscripts, themes, blue-books, bound notes, and such scholarly débris, bespoke both masculine neglect and the college instructor.

The spirit of the room was sitting in a far corner, deep in a comfortable chair, removed from light, silent. He too was incongruous — a short, fat man, past the prime of life, his face, unhealthily pallid, graven with sober, pondering lines. He was relaxed in the chair, in an attitude of exhaustion, fat hands sprawled on bulky knees. His eyes were closed; but this could not be seen, for he wore heavy dark glasses — glasses like automobile goggles, that completely covered his eyes, excluding every ray of light not sobered by their smoky lenses.

Edward Sayward at fifty years of age was going blind. There was no denying the fact, no avoiding the cruel issue coming so surely, inexorably. He had always worn glasses, — true; but not until a year previous, after a severe illness, had he been conscious of anything more serious than ordinary weak sight. Then, illusive spots, black and elfish,

dancing before his vision, caused him to seek his oculist. Then it was another oculist. Finally, a great specialist. The verdict had been the same. His sight was worn out. A man does not spend with impunity twenty years of his life busied all day, almost all night, reading and writing. He would become perfectly blind. The specialist had even been able to set the date. It was now two weeks hence, crawling slowly toward you when you watched it; when you forgot it, hastening hideously.

As an instructor he had done his work efficiently. He had gone up in his department steadily, reassuringly. Another sabbatical would have seen him a full professor, quoted and respected — a power in the university where already he was well recognized. Now all was swept away by a force greater than he, a force impossible to combat, unlike the other forces he had fought, in his struggle up from penury, where a good issue was at least likely. Somehow, in those keen battles, he had never dreamed of treachery, never thought that the body he was trying to stay with flagons and apples would so disastrously turn against him, making all his work supererogation.

It was the extra work. Had he been content, as were so many of his colleagues, merely to plod the daily path of an English instructor, correcting the daily themes (a monstrous task), marking the blue-books, attending to the conferences and the reading-assignments; and, after this his work was

done, if he had been content to go out and enjoy himself in recreation of some sort, — not using his poor eyes, in every minute he could snatch, on that useless biography he had been writing for ten years, — this might not have happened.

He saw it all now. It was wrong. He was vaguely glad that he had no family, that he lived in two rooms in an old house kept by an invisible slattern, a home chosen by him because of its inaccessibility to work-disturbing friends. Yet he realized that if he had cultivated humanity in the flesh, rather than creatively, upon paper, all might have been different.

And now — two weeks! For some time he had been practicing blindness, anticipating the narrowness, the peculiar condition of a blind existence. He had walked much with closed eyes; he had begun counting paces, memorizing the aspects of streets that he daily used, in order to facilitate his later progress. He had practiced eating with closed eyes, for he had a morbid distaste of personal uncleanness, and he had heard that the blind did not, could not, take care. But most of all he drilled his finger-tips, touching, feeling, shaping everything sedulously, that by constant application he might school the sensitive flesh-pads to take the place, to some extent, of the vanishing eyes.

This afternoon Sayward had come to a crisis. He was alone, as usual; had sat in the chair two hours, perfectly still, pondering. There were two weeks of light left — but such light! Day and night he must wear his heavy glasses, for the white glare of daylight was utter destruction for him. Day by day the sight would imperceptibly dim a little, until came the final blotting-out. So, ignominiously, and in twilight, the day would go for him. Why not hasten it? Why not cut it off in the full glory

of full sight? Better that than this murky exit.

Having arrived at this conclusion, he was suddenly invigorated; he rose quickly, ready to put his thought into action. Two blocks away from his house was a park — a remarkably pretty park — where, in summer, lovers idled; where, in autumn, thinkers paced; where, in spring, the world trembled into being before any other spot in the city. It was ordered, restrained, chastened beauty in nature that Sayward loved — the full brilliancy of cultivated flower-beds, formed of plants of whose names he was totally ignorant; the level green of rich sward; trees planted symmetrically and kept well; clean gravel paths; a silver fountain playing; all relieved against stonework, massive and clear-cut — these were Sayward's demands. The country was vaguely a terrifying place; he had not been out of urban districts since boyhood; there was a vast lawless license about the country or the sea that frightened him, drove him in on himself. But in small, prim parkways his soul expanded, and was genial, unafraid. This, then, was the place for the exquisite sacrifice.

He took his hat and his cane (a cane above all things) and went out. He could see nothing through his glasses but a uniformity of gray; yet he knew the day had in it all of singing spring: the urchins shouted and bubbled with laughter over their street ball-game; the air was like a rose-petal on his cheek. Farther on, a great-jowled, deliberate tom-cat was rolling on the ground with the zest of a kitten; the movements of every one were more blithe. And his spirits rose, too, with his quick step; he was inexpressibly glad that he was to see the light again.

He turned into the park, walked down a long avenue, and came out on his favorite spot, the objective point of

the curiously regular and monotonous walks he took for exercise. It was a large platform of stone, the head of a flight of steps, that, broad and shallow, sloped to a smaller inclosure below. At either side was a wall, and one could stand here, lean over, and look down on the freshness. The smaller park was merely an oval of grass, inclosed like an island by the dividing of the avenue; but here was the silver fountain, and round about it the beds of flowers — not scatteringly planted, but solid blanks of color set into the grass like an enamel. And behind him was the shapely row of young trees, now newly leafed in drops of vert-gold, or in faint shades of mauve and gray, all very gratefully relieved against boles of black, wet bark.

Sayward came and stood where he could feel the rough granite of the coping reassuringly warm in his hands under the mellow spring sun. He waited a moment. To the left there was another figure, a slim erect young man. Sayward saw him and frowned. Well, what did it matter? He could not wait for him to go; besides he would not interfere with Sayward, or even be cognizant of what was taking place behind his back.

Sayward tore off the glasses. The beauty of the spot rushed upon him, many times intensified by his longing, and his actual color-starvation. That was what he lacked — color: riotous, crude color, — reds, blues, greens, — such color as the flowers, the lawn, and the sky gave; half-shades, too — the faint pink of the granite beneath his fingers, the exquisite tint of yellow-green, and lady-gray, against the black bark; the silver fountain, diamond against the watchet of the sky; even the circumscribed glimpse of the distant hills — how multitudinous their changing shades, governed by the eager, drifting smoke-haze of the city!

To his left, a small aspen answered the faint breeze, and its delicately-hung leaves broke into a ripple of laughter, in twinkling silver-green, both visible and audible laughter. Even his hearing seemed keener — the gray veil over his eyes had been a real obstruction in his ears. The whole good gift of light and sound was his again; he lived in an exquisite world, in an illumined ripple.

And then, abruptly, swarmingspecks. And after that, with appalling swiftness, the vision dimmed, as though a sinister night was settling down upon it. The sunlight on the lawn turned to a bilious hue, lost meaning as sunlight, became a light spot in a fog of gloom, was gone. Upon the heels of its departure came a darkness the like of which he had never imagined, not even on the blackest of impenetrable nights.

A sense of being dropped into an immense formless chaos or void overcame him; he reeled, clutched giddily at the stone before him; cried out faintly — an inarticulate sound.

Thereupon, his soul came to his lips, and, like a man upon high places, he spoke aloud, forgetful of time, place, being — because for him there was none of those things. "I am blind," he said; "I, Edward Sayward, am blind!"

It was some time before he was very conscious of anything. Then it was of a hand hard on his shoulder, and a voice beating at his ears. He roused himself to attention, gripped himself; finally he put up a hand to that hand, and found it firm and strong, very reassuring; and so, with that grip, Sayward came down from the high places, and remembered that he was puny and blind and helpless.

The voice was very helpful — rather an unusual voice; it spoke out loud and clear, young, with none of the tremors of the young.

"Mr. Sayward? Are you in trouble?" and, "Can I help?"

"I am blind! I have just become blind!"

Sayward heard a breath drawn sharply; then an arm came vigorously under his, the cane was taken from his hand, he was propelled forward gently. "I will take you home," said the voice.

For a time Sayward suffered himself to be led on the gravel path; then he hungered suddenly for the strong voice. "Who are you?"

The answer came, prompt. "Thomas Hervey. I'm in the college, Mr. Sayward. In fact, I had the pleasure — last year — of hearing your lectures in English 17. I am a junior."

Sayward spoke again. "Are you taking me home? Take me home."

He abandoned himself, spoke even as a little child.

He volunteered his tale, explained the curious situation, found the young man understood immediately with no unpleasant exclamations of wonder or surprise — only the hand closed tighter on Sayward's arm, and he said simply, "I, too, come to the park."

Hervey — the name was not familiar to Sayward — asked a curt direction as to the house, guided the blind man across the street, perilous with gutters and curbs; and, in a moment, the two were standing at Sayward's door. Hervey opened it with Sayward's proffered latch-key, and immediately mounted the stairs, still supporting Sayward.

Sayward's brain was all askew and he asked how Hervey knew the way.

"I came here for three conferences," replied the young man.

At the head of the stairs was the room. They went in, Sayward more at ease. He found his chair and unsteadily sank into it.

Hervey stumbled against a chair, and he heard a low stifled cry, and

then a laugh of amusement as his visitor sat down. "I'm clumsy," said Hervey.

Again in his room, the meaner, usual thoughts crowded thickly upon Sayward, in a commonplace reaction from all the bright beauty that he had seen, that had filled his soul. In anguish, in utter despair, he bowed his head on his hands, at last fully realizing the tawdry words, "I am blind."

"Is there anything I can do? Do you want an oculist? Can I notify any one?"

To these questions Sayward answered with a groan. No one. He had been wont to congratulate himself on having no one to look after; now he realized that there was no one to look after him. He stated this dispassionately, and lapsed into a dogged silence. He was like a man in great physical pain; it hurt to speak. He forgot where he was and gave himself up to the great darkness, closing his eyes to make it seem more natural. It followed that he fell asleep.

Four hours later he awoke. That awakening was not pleasant to see. The brain, made forgetful by sleep, forced staring eyelids wider and wider in an effort to get the light that unaccountably was denied them. Sayward gasped, clutched at the air, cried out. Then he was fully awake and conscious. He remembered that he was blind; he remembered Hervey. He spoke.

Hervey's voice was prompt in reply. Sayward heard steps come to him, felt a good material hand on his shoulder.

"What time is it? Have I slept long?"

"Eight o'clock. You have slept four hours."

Sayward considered the extraordinary statement slowly, stupid from his sleep. "Have — have you been here?"

"Yes; I thought you might need something."

"But — but are n't you hungry?"

"Are n't you?" countered the voice merrily.

"Yes." Then Sayward hesitated, shrinking. "I hate to go out to my restaurant — I eat at a restaurant."

But Hervey was already on his feet. "Stay where you are!" he commanded. "I will bring you something," and he was gone.

He was back in ten minutes. The cheerful noise he made coming up the stairs was a great relief to the racked Sayward, haunted by the dead silence of the old empty house. As soon as Hervey was in the room Sayward smelt food. He found it to be hot egg-sandwiches, plebeian and satisfying, tender sliced chicken, milk, even a triangle of apple-pie — a heterogeneous meal, but a meal, which, shared with the steadily talkative and merry Hervey, was extremely comforting. He felt better. He said so.

Then Hervey announced that Sayward must go to bed. He insisted. The older man was as clay in his hands. In a short time he had helped him undress, found his night-clothes for him, got him into the narrow bed, and adjusted the window. He even wound the "blind-clock" which Sayward had anticipatively purchased. "Sleep till you please, to-morrow," he said.

Sayward remonstrated drowsily. Fellows came in the morning for conferences.

"Well, let the first one wake you," said Hervey charitably. "And now — good-night."

And he was gone; almost at once Sayward fell deeply asleep.

As it happened, the boy that forethought had hired for a street-companion, a leader-to-meals, waked him in good season, the next day. The excitement of immediate duties kept

thought sufficiently in abeyance until the afternoon; for, in the morning, young men thronged his room, and he catechised them on the weekly reading. This required no eyesight. The condensed literature of England for a thousand years was neatly packed away on a shelf in his brain; some of his eyesight had gone for *that* — the enormous, stupendous burden of rhyme and reason he carried with him. And yet, conversely, it would perhaps now illuminate the dark places. Correcting the theses was another matter. Yet he compromised for a time by having the boys read their work aloud to him, while he slashingly criticised, for his feeling for the balance of words was very apt. So went the morning, with human companionship, and with good healthy noise about, very grateful to the blind man. Yet the fellows, though courteous, were distant. It was after all nothing to them — he would reflect in these days when reflection was not a luxury but a necessity — that their mentor in a branch of knowledge which they, reveling in the happy field of an elective system, had chosen for cursory delight and even more cursory labor, was blind. A momentary flash of sympathy, a hand readier than usual to help, if he stumbled, that was all. Unconsciously cruel, they left him, to pass to their young lives of sunshine, immediately forgetting him and his gloom.

So it happened that they receded from him. Instead of using them — as had been his intention — to train himself in the difficult but imperative task of the blind, distinguishing personality by the voice, he found that they became not individuals but a characterless mob, composites, — so many dummies. They entered. He queried. They spoke a name. He counted down a row of blue-books, found the right number, and drew it forth, questioned,

answered, taught, dismissed, put down a grade-letterscrawlingly in the cover of the book, returned it mechanically to its place, was ready for the next entity. And, as he grew used to the process and the noise, and as the morning progressed, his duties became more and more mechanical, and desolation spread insidiously into the corners of his mind.

After lunch, and back again in his room, he descended into veritable hell. He had read of hell as a place of darkness, with unseen weeping and wailing sounding blindly in the dark. He believed it. With sight, much fire and brimstone would have been very welcome, very pleasant, very flower-soft, beautiful. He sat huddled in his chair; there was nothing to do, no one to speak to. He might have walked the streets, but he was acutely fearful of being struck; out there it seemed as if a blow were always imminent, and yet never falling; he winced and shuddered at every little noise, and, when a chance pedestrian jostled him gently, trembled with the shock for minutes afterward. He had, on first coming in, opened a window, and had sat by it a moment; but the velvet air, and the merry noise of children below, had driven him away, back into the far corner of the room, where he could sit in absolute silence; for the stir of outdoors bespoke the visible beauty of spring, denied to him, of all mortals. Then, for a space, he wept silently; great slow tears that hurt rolled incongruously enough—and to a not very sentient person, ridiculously—on his fat cheeks. Finally he lost that relief, and sat staring in dull hopelessness.

He was wondering if it was worth while. Would it not be better to end it somehow—with a convenient revolver or drug? He was very near death for a while: had he possessed a revolver he might have used it; he was too shaken and limp to go out for means of

death. It appeared, grimly, hard even to die. Yet he did not believe very whole-heartedly in an after life; he had thought but superficially about it, pushing religion, philosophy, and all such abstruse things into later life, along with other culture (he had art-longings), to a remote region dissociated with the pressure of continual work, when he should have time thoroughly to master or explore them, vaguely realizing that they demanded time. And now time was no object; and neither was life. He preferred the complete blank of death to this partial and irritating blank of life.

A knock at the door! It roused him; he wanted to be alone. Immediately he reflected that it was the landlady with the mail—and therefore he *would* be alone. That reflection chilled him in spite of desires. His heart sank. But the door promptly clicked open, and a voice, a voice he knew, spoke.

“Mr. Sayward?”

“Here,” said Sayward from the depths of the chair.

“May I come in? I’m Hervey. Are you busy?”

The voice waited for no reply; but Sayward heard the young man enter, draw up a chair, and sit near him.

“It’s you,” said Sayward dully; “it’s you.” He roused himself from that deadly lethargy, spoke with less naked emotion in his voice, with more of everyday courtesy. “I’m glad to see you. Is there anything I can do for you?”

This last was mechanical, the invariable, inevitable query that had to be put to all young men who called. No one ever called who did not want something of him.

“Oh, no,” replied the voice. “I merely came to call. If I’m not welcome—pitch me out!”

There was a cheerful laugh, which evinced no fear of such an event.

Some one interested! It warmed Sayward like an actual material glow. He sat up straighter. "You're very welcome," he said simply. "These first days are a bit — troublesome." Shaken and weak though he was, pride would not let him admit — even to sympathy — how very troublesome indeed the first days were. "It's good of you to come in. I have n't much to do in the afternoons and evenings. It's a little strange, you see, at first. I am used to doing a great deal of writing." And then, at a sympathetic noise from Hervey, he hastily dismissed self. "Who are you?" he said directly; "tell me about yourself. What do you look like?"

The other laughed easily. "Well," he said, "they tell me I'm brown-haired and brown-eyed, and very childish for my twenty-three years, and that it's time I was a man. But I say the best men are only children at heart, and if on certain occasions I want to stand on my head on a soft-feeling lawn, say, or yell, detractions from manliness can go hang!"

Fingers touched Sayward's shoulder and ran lightly down his arm to his hand, which was seized and lifted till it touched Hervey's face.

"Try this," said the young man. "Touch me with finger-tips. Perhaps that will convey an impression. You'll have to learn this trick, you know."

Sayward had a momentary reflection that it was strange to have a man find his hand *via* his shoulder and arm; but put it aside as he touched a human face. He felt delicate features, no more; his callous fingers responded only to crude details.

"Bad," said Hervey; "let me show you." A hand touched his shoulder again, ran up to his chin, and then over his face like a touch of velvet, so light that it tickled. "Touch gently," said Hervey.

"You seem to be very much initiated," said Sayward wonderingly.

The other answered directly: "An uncle of mine is blind"; and then, while the hand gripped Sayward's shoulder hard, "that's why I come to see you, and shall, if you don't mind, because" — he paused — "because — I know, when you first get like this — you — it's pretty gloomy — morbid. You need a little quickening, a little lifting out of self. You feel like suicide — and all that."

What things the man knew! Sayward felt astonished, guilty.

"And then — at first — it's hard mingling with other people. They don't seem to understand. They are not interested. Like all hurt animals you want to crawl to a hole. Now that's bad."

The over-strained Sayward gave way at that. Merciful tears welled; he bowed his head on his hand and shook with anguish and a trembling weakness new to him. Despair had fortified, hope weakened him. He put his hands to his eyes, that the other might not see. The deeper things in this new experience came to the surface and were shaken from him in disjointed words; proud, aloof man, he told this calm boy whose hands were so firm, of the pain, pain, crushing pain, of it all, of the awful gloom of this enshrouded life of his, of the unbearable agony of it.

"I know — I know," said the comforting voice at intervals, and the strong grip on his arm never loosened.

Slowly he came to himself; and he withdrew into his shell.

"But don't forget," said Hervey, "that I am with you."

Sayward clutched at the significant unsaid; then, all but in the shell, released it. He could n't make demands on any one's time that way. Indeed, no! He was much obliged, grateful, but —

Hervey cut him short.

"I particularly wanted to ask you to tell me about the 1749 period of English literature"; and Sayward heard him settle decisively in his chair.

This diversion grew into a respectable engagement. Sayward found it far from a random query: the boy was keen as a hawk; he evidently wanted information; could supply the usual generalities, most of the specifics, and wanted the particulars. It was Sayward's favorite period, the field of his biography; in a trice they were deep in words. In reply to the clever, irritating, "Do you think," and "Tell me abouts," that Hervey so constantly interjected, Sayward began to assume his old instructorial air, — fat fingers held judiciously before his stomach, the tips neatly juxtaposed, grave head bowed over them, fact and fancy streaming from his mouth. In Hervey he found an unusual opponent, and, conversely, a warm partisan. The afternoon waned swiftly.

When a clock struck six they were both surprised. Hervey rose at once. At the door he seemed to pause. "Mind if I drop in after dinner?" he said abruptly.

Sayward murmured something about being selfish and grasping, which meant that he did not mind.

Hervey, with perfect tact, chose to regard himself favored.

"I particularly want to hear about Walpole and his duchesses," he said. "About eight, then." And he was gone.

During the week that followed, Hervey came regularly in the afternoons and evenings. Sayward's whole being cried out to him for aid, and when that was secured by Hervey's presence, basked in it, drawing strength from the other's strength.

It was quite selfish: he never tired of Hervey; seemed unable to comprehend, except dimly, that Hervey could

tire of him. Hervey amused him, enthralled him; in short, was the one link between him and the world. The young man was very skillful in the small devices that set people talking; he drew out Sayward constantly, with a queer eagerness, as if seeking to absorb all that he knew. Yet he told little about himself, scarcely more than an afternoon's acquaintance would ordinarily reveal.

Literature was their best common ground; on other topics they were not so successful. Hervey appeared to have an extraordinary ignorance of all art, a thing which Sayward loved; painting being his particular hobby. He would wave his hand toward the walls of his room. Did not Hervey know such a common picture as that — the one above his desk, for instance, the Hireling Shepherd? or this, third from the door, the Botticelli? Remarkable! His education had been neglected. Sayward would remedy the neglect. Take his room, for example. Here was the foundation of an interest in art: all the schools of importance represented on its walls. He had a clear mental vision of those walls, and he went the rounds, naming and describing the famous reprints, and the brace of prized originals, to an indifferent and unusually silent Hervey. Sayward, however, could not remember one painting, the one just over the hearth. He racked his brain. Finally, vexed, he asked the young man to describe it. There was a silence. Then he heard Hervey walk slowly to the wall, evidently with intent to examine the work. He said nothing. To repeated questionings he replied falteringly that it was a characterless thing, hard to describe.

"Characterless?" echoed Sayward. "What is it, landscape, portrait, or interior?"

"Interior," said Hervey, after another pause.

Sayward suddenly remembered. "Interior! Why, no, it is n't either! It's a Corot landscape: the Dante and Virgil in the Wood. It's a dim thing — but it's not an interior! You *must* be inartistic indeed!"

He was moved to chuckle at the extraordinary error. Hervey reaffirmed his large ignorance of art; Sayward went and felt the frame of the etching and was confirmed in his decision. He told Hervey he had better stick to literature, where a future for him was not inauspicious. Hervey laughed and acquiesced. The afternoon ended in gayety; some light was beginning faintly to pierce the utter darkness.

He had two other visitors that week: the oculist, who chid him gently for his rash act, but, in his very tones, proclaimed the fact that it had merely been a hastening of the inevitable; and the head of his department, who was sympathetically businesslike, and who, having found out that Sayward could do all of his work without sight, assured him cordially that his position was still his, and departed, leaving Sayward coldly comforted.

He groped for Hervey, — Hervey who comforted warmly, Hervey who amused. Hervey was the only one he had yet found who knew instinctively the disabilities of the blind without over-reaching the mark and omitting to notice the remaining assets. For, he confidently asserted to himself after ten days of experience, a blind man is not necessarily a dead man: except for his blank eyes, he is whole. The head of the department had treated him as if he were a baby; the fellows shied at him as if he were some new and interesting animal. Also Hervey showed Sayward many valuable little tricks of step-counting, of judging direction and distance by sound; he purchased a "blind typewriter" for him, and Sayward learned clumsily to manipulate

the instrument, and to read the ribbon it stamped; above all Hervey gave constant encouragement. To learn was very difficult for Sayward; it is hard to acquire a new language after middle age, and he would often give up in gloom and despair; whereupon Hervey's voice would urge him to renewed effort. Doubtless without this patient tutelage he would never have learned.

One would not have recognized him now. His flaccid cheeks had taken on a healthier tone; his step was firmer; he had forgotten to wince at the blow that never fell; he had acquired an interest in life. It was, after all, pleasant to live — even sightless. The emotion came back to him like blood into paralyzed veins, all with the joy of the spring, a joy no longer antagonistic, but sympathetic. Hervey and he walked in the streets. He had insisted, though Hervey had been strangely reluctant at first. They had gone several times to the park, and once, Sayward, in defiance of rude park sign-boards, handled growing things, getting exquisite pleasure from the soft hairy surfaces of leaves or the satin petals of flowers. He even had his little joke. "Can't read the park rules," he said, "don't see 'em, you know." And this the man, two weeks ago, contemplating suicide!

Another time when they went out, he heard a cryptic sentence that disturbed him. Arm in arm with Hervey, he passed footsteps and rustling garments. A voice exclaimed low, but penetrating to sharp blind-ears: "Look at that! Two of them!" He asked Hervey what it meant; Hervey had n't heard; he congratulated him gayly on his hearing.

That evening Sayward unlocked the innermost recess of his heart. He told Hervey for the first time of his work — the immortal biography, the blighted fruit of ten years' labor. Hervey was at once interested, so Sayward went exhaustively into details, of the hun-

dreds of works he had consulted, of the condensation and the great scope of the whole. Hervey was more interested; how near was it to completion? Three-quarters done, sighed Sayward. Later he suggested guilelessly that it might — might be finished, if he had an able amanuensis, one who knew the period with the knowledge of a scholar and the devotion of an enthusiast. Hervey seemed to think such an amanuensis a rare, unusual jewel. Silence fell.

Deep in his heart Sayward, with the unconscious selfishness of a blind man, had expected Hervey to volunteer; but he did not. Finally Sayward stirred and said, "You'll find it in the lower drawer, a fat pile, the notes and quotations are on top, my work at bottom."

He heard fumbling in the drawer subsequently, and then much fluttering of paper. He waited a time for Hervey to read. "What do you think of it?" he asked after four or five minutes of silence on Hervey's part, for he was very anxious to get a good

opinion, nervous as a sculptor unveiling his first statue to a critical public.

"It's very good. It's beyond me. The style is vigorous, effective."

"Isn't it?" said Sayward, moving his feet delightedly. Then: "Read me a little. I'm hungry to hear a little."

But the boy opposite rose abruptly. "I'm — I'm overdue for an appointment already. I'm sorry, I must go —"

Sayward was disappointed clearly. "But you'll read a little to-morrow."

The boy queried suddenly, "May I take it with me overnight, to read?"

Sayward demurred, astonished. "Why, if you have time to read it to-night, why not read it here?"

There was a long silence. He heard the other breathing slow and hard.

"Why not?" he pressed.

The other answered strangely: "I cannot."

"Cannot!"

Hervey's voice came to him very simply: —

"No. For I, too, am — blind!"

THE CLUE

(On reading N. S. Shaler's Autobiography)

BY WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER

LIFE is a clearing in a wood
Where stays, mid-flight, the Soul — a thrush —
Bathes in the beam and finds it good,
Peoples with song the solitude,
Then, singing, dares the dark, the hush.

